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ARISTASIA: THE FEMININE EMPIRE

The Aristasian Imperial Flag

Everyone knows the Aristasian Imperial Flag. Whether fluttering over the great spires of the Imperial Palace at Ladyton or standing in the corner of a Trentish classroom along with the blue-and-gold flag of that nation, the first sight of it never fails to stir the heart.

Can any true Aristasian see the flag of her Motherland without a catch in the throat and a swelling of love and pride in the chest?

Yet how many of us understand what the Flag really means and why it takes the form it does?

The origin of the Imperial flag lies in the ancient flag of Caire, the Eastern empire from which the modern Western Empire is descended. This flag was a stylised sunburst in red (*gules*) upon gold (*or*). It represented, of course, the Solar nature of the Empress and of the Empire. The rays of the sun extend in the eight directions of space. Now the directions of space can be represented by a simple cross, as four, or by a six-spoked wheel as six (the four cardinal directions plus up and down), or as eight. The eight-spoked wheel is particularly associated with Sai Thamë, and therefore with the Golden Order, harmony, authority, and rule, which concepts, as we have explained elsewhere, are closely related in Aristasian thought. This symbolism is clearly present in both the ancient and the modern flags.

The colors of the ancient Imperial Flag, red and gold, represent the heat and light of the sun respectively and also (which is closely related) the union of the Haiela, the priestly and intellectual estate, with the Raihira, the noble, royal, and when necessary Vikhelic (martial) estate. Also, at a profounder level, the heat and light of the sun represent love and intellect respectively — the two paths to Divine realization.

The Cairen Empire came to the fore during the ancient wars with the outland demons. Most previous forms of government had been more purely spiritual in nature, with the Raihira function being entirely subordinate. The Raihira function, of course, remained subordinate (the revolt of the Raihira against the Haiela, which has been the cause of much of the degeneration of Telluria, did not take place explicitly in Aristasia), though the increasing prominence of the Raihira function was a necessary part of the more materialized or consolidated nature of the later ages — and while the Cairen Empire is ancient to modern Aristasians, having come about more then 3,000 years ago, it still came about late in the Historical Cycle.

The Priestess-Queen, or Priestly-Empress had long been the ruler of most nations, but in Cairen times her Queenly

function became at least as important as her priestly function. This change had in fact been taking place for some time, but the wars and the rise of Caire accelerated it considerably. At certain points there were two Queens or Empresses — the Golden Empress who reigned at home and carried out primarily spiritual functions and the Red Empress who went fo some cases, the Red (or Blue) Princess became the secular ruler in peacetime, while the Golden (or W became the Spiritual ruler; but here we approach the time when many forms of government existed in th e developing West, each claiming to be the true heir of the one True Empire.

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H er the functions represented by the Golden Empress and the Red Empress were in fact performed by tw ointed *Rayins* or were performed by the same person, their union is represented in the colors of the ancient Imperial Flag, which is still used — when Amazonia is regarded as a single nation — as the flag of Aristasia, as well (sometimes with variations) as that of various Estrenne states.

The modern Imperial flag is clearly derived from the ancient one, the main difference being the substitution of a blue (*azure*) ground for the gold (*or*) one, though the device is still surrounded by its own gold ground (which, incidentally, is necessary in order to preserve the heraldic rule that a tincture may not be imposed on a tincture or a metal on a metal). This increases the element of Thamë in the Standard (blue being the colour of Sai Thamë) at the expense of the purely Spiritual element of Sai Raya, indicating an increasingly earthly orientation.

As has been explained in the essay on the Flags of the Nations, another symbolism of the three primary colors, Yellow (or Gold), Red, and Blue associates them with the three Gunas, Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas respectively. Thus the Westrenne Flag, which belongs to the latter part of the Age of Iron, acknowledges the admixture of the downward tendency of Tamas with the upward and outward tendencies (respectively) of Sattwa and Rajas.

Yet, while the Imperial flag recognizes the greater “consolidation” or “earthliness” of these latter days, it remains primarily and fundamentally a Solar symbol: an insignia of the holy Light that penetrates all darkness and sheds its radiance wherever it falls; a symbol of the far-radiating power of the great Mother-Sun, which spreads ever wider, enlightening beings fallen into darkness.

Thus the Imperial flag is symbolically perfect also for the further-flung operations of the Empire which aim to help intemorphic children like ourselves trapped in darker worlds such as patriarchal Telluria.

See also: The Flags of the Aristasian Nations

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